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# Something lost along the way: changing patterns of leadership in Scottish residential schools

**Mark Smith**

## **Abstract**

This article considers changing patterns of leadership in Scottish residential schools through the life histories of those who have undertaken leadership roles in the sector over the past 50 years. A case is made for the relevance of life history methods in offering a rich picture of the lived realities of residential child care over time. The stories are analysed to identify some features of leadership in the schools, locating these within the changing external policy environment. General trends from innovation towards regulation and from personalised towards standardised leadership practices are identified. The article employs wider theoretical insights to offer some evaluative comment on these changes, concluding that the path has not necessarily been one of untrammelled progress and that much of the value base and creativity that characterised earlier expressions of leadership has been lost along the way.

## **Keywords**

Residential schools, Scotland, leadership, life histories, regulation

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## **Introduction**

Various inquiries into residential care settings and particularly residential schools point to failures of leadership in ensuring that children were adequately protected (e.g. Waterhouse, 2000 and in a Scottish context, Frizzell, 2009). It has become received wisdom in professional and policy communities that this was the case; a default position that has served to prompt and legitimise a series of managerial and regulatory reforms. This article introduces a more rounded and positive perspective on leadership in residential schools. The basis of the article is a collection of life history interviews conducted with key informants who undertook leadership roles in such establishments over a period of around 50 years. The interviews were conducted during 2009/10, initially for PhD research on the changing nature of care in such schools. The data gathered offers a rich picture of leadership in such schools and how this has changed over time. I conclude that much of what is posited as 'improvement' or 'modernisation' in management and

leadership practices has not all been positive and that there are lessons to be learnt from what went before.

## Background

I take as a starting point for this research the Kilbrandon Report (1964) into juvenile delinquency, while recognising there were elements of continuity between then and what went before. Prior to (and indeed following) Kilbrandon there were strong authoritarian and hierarchical aspects running through the regimes in many approved schools, often reflecting the military backgrounds of many of those who went on to work in them. Nevertheless, the residential schools also attracted a number of idealistic young teachers. For instance, the father of one of my interviewees, who was headmaster in two approved schools had been a conscientious objector during the Second World War and saw the approved schools as satisfying his sense of idealism more than would be achieved in mainstream education at the time. As my informant observed, 'despite all of the regimentation ... there were pockets of truly imaginative work' in the schools.

Kilbrandon reported at a time of wider social and political optimism and a belief in social progress. The report reflected a faith that the social sciences might offer a means through which to understand and intervene in the social world in a similar way that the natural sciences offered a window on the physical world. This led Kilbrandon to express the belief that we might eradicate or at least substantially reduce juvenile delinquency through his proposals for social education (Smith and Whyte, 2008), reflecting a wider zeitgeist in Scottish society, as Paterson observes:

From that same time, too, we have the internationally respected Scottish system of community education, linking education, youth work and community development in an attempt to regenerate whole communities, enabling them to take responsibility for their own lives (2000, p. 50).

Kilbrandon and the subsequent Social Work (Scotland) Act, 1968, which introduced what we might identify as a modern social work profession, failed to conclude on where residential schools might fit into the new world, partly to do with turf wars between teachers who had traditionally held leadership positions in the schools and the emerging social work profession. While social work functions became a local authority responsibility, residential schools, apart from a couple of exceptions, remained centrally funded and managed through local boards of managers. Catholic religious orders, others by the Church of Scotland and others ran several of the schools as charitable trusts. They were almost all single-sex and primarily for boys. Former approved schools became List D Schools, while those for children deemed to be maladjusted became List G, for no other reason than the order on which they appeared on a Scottish Education Department list.

While the thrust of Kilbrandon and the Social Work (Scotland) Act was to support families in community settings, the years following the Act were the high point of residential care usage. It was only from the early 1980s that schools began to close, reflecting both a combination of a social work ideology that was largely hostile to institutional care and

restrictions on public service funding following the election of the Thatcher government in 1979.

Subsequent shifts, which fundamentally influenced management and leadership in the schools, were the increasing impact of local authority bureaucratic structures, especially following the intensification of managerialist approaches over the course of the 1980s and '90s and more recently the regulatory agenda following from the Regulation of Care Act (2001). I seek to illuminate these shifts through the life histories of those who undertook leadership roles in the schools.

## Research Methods

The research on which this article draws employed a life history approach. Life history research is well established in education (e.g. Goodson and Sikes, 2001). It has been employed less often in residential child care, although there are examples of oral histories, such as Elaine Harris's project at Kibble, while Webb (2010) offers a fascinating biographical account of his great aunt's time as matron of a Church of England children's home. I have argued elsewhere (Smith, 2010) that residential child care has become defined by the stories of those who claim to have been abused in such settings and that, within this discourse, those who worked in the schools have had their voices silenced. Life stories can be argued to give voice to silenced voices (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). In this sense this article offers a perspective on leadership in the schools from those who undertook the role, which has been largely submerged in the dominant accounts set down in inquiry reports.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) argue that life history approaches are not merely introspective tales, but they locate individuals in the wider social, cultural and historical contexts that they inhabit. Such approaches use sociological or psychological theory as interpretational and explanatory tools. Writing about life history work with teachers, Goodson emphasises that:

the crucial focus for life history work is to locate the teacher's own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis, .... The distinction between the life story and the life history is therefore absolutely basic. The life story is the 'story we tell about our life' ... The life history is the life story located within its historical context (1992, p. 6).

It is this sense of locating individuals' stories within wider social context that I seek to explicate in this article. A further methodological strand and source of understanding of this wider context stemmed from my own status as an 'insider' in the residential school community. I spent almost 20 years in practice and management, mostly in residential school settings. Insider research can invite criticism in traditional academic circles where claims to pass off accounts of lived experience as research are typically perceived not to conform to standards of intellectual rigour because of the 'insider's' personal and emotional investment in the setting and their consequent difficulty achieving detachment and objectivity (Alvesson, 2003). On the other hand, insiders, according to Brannick and Coughlan 'are able to articulate tacit knowledge that has become deeply segmented

because of socialization in an organizational system and reframe it as theoretical knowledge' (2007, p. 60). The same authors argue that, rather than neglecting at-hand knowledge or expertise, researchers should turn familiar situations, timely events or special expertise into objects of study. In this case, my insider status meant that I knew individuals and institutions that were discussed by respondents. Because of my socialized knowledge of the sector, I understood what they are talking about in relation to care practices that might be more difficult for someone without such a background to interpret.

Research samples for life history research are usually relatively small (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). I interviewed nine experienced current and/or former residential child care leaders. The case selection was primarily made on the basis of convenience, drawn from contacts I had built up over the years, three of whom I had worked with directly in different capacities, others I knew through wider national contacts. The list is not exhaustive; I had intended and still intend to extend the number of interviews. Those interviewed included a current head of a residential school, three former heads, a manager in a children's home who started his career in a residential school, two psychologists who had worked in the schools and a current training manager for a residential community. Three were women and six men.

Interviewees were invited to tell me about their own backgrounds, their move into working in the residential schools, their subsequent leadership roles in the sector and their reflections on the changing context of such leadership. I have sought, as far as possible, to maintain a level of anonymity in respect of both individuals and institutions.

### **Characteristics of leadership in the schools**

The interview data was analysed to identify some of the personal characteristics of leadership in the residential schools but also the changing external environment within which that leadership was exercised. I begin by outlining the biographies of individuals, which perhaps predisposed them to such work, within which a strong sense of vocation was central. I then consider the external environment, addressing roles of Scottish Office civil servants and the List D Schools Psychological Service. These were identified as both supportive and encouraging of creativity. I then chart some of the shifts in the external environment towards the more managerial and, latterly, more regulated and compliance-based regimes that characterise present day external management.

### ***Biographies and motivation of key informants***

A feature of life history approaches to research into professions is that they recognise the embodied aspects of the work. Smith (2001) argues that '(t)eachers' life experiences and background affect what they believe, and consequently, how they teach'. This is at least as true in residential care, where dispositional qualities are perhaps more important than instrumental ones; who residential workers are can be as important as or more important than what they do. Residential care is a 'self in action' endeavour (Fewster, 1990) within which lives rarely can be compartmentalised into professional and personal selves. Exercising a leadership role in such settings is not, then, merely about following a set of

management competencies but is fundamentally influenced by an individual's beliefs and experiences. These qualities of life histories were evident in this study.

None of my informants identified residential child care work as a conscious career choice. Rather, as one informant said 'like a lot of other folk, I kind of ended up in this line of work by accident'. Nevertheless, a strong value base and sense of vocation was apparent in bringing all of the interviewees into this line of work, which made retrospective sense of them choosing this pathway. In many cases, there was a religious motivation. For instance, one respondent entered university to study Classics with a view to becoming a Church of Scotland minister. Having moved away from a career in the ministry he wanted to do voluntary service overseas and ended up on a programme that led to teacher training and work as a teacher in East Africa before returning to the UK and pursuing a career in special education. Another participant's father was a Church of Scotland minister and Director of the Church's social work wing. His family experience included regular visits to a range of social care projects and subsequent work in night shelters led to a degree in psychology and social administration and a subsequent social work qualification, which involved a placement in a List D School and subsequent employment there. A further interviewee, following a university social science degree, moved into residential work through church based youth work. In this case, family values were again a significant influence, both religious and through a background in fostering children. One might then discern a strong value base with roots in religious or family backgrounds oriented towards a notion of service to others as being foundational in drawing individuals to work in the schools.

While a strong value base was the foundation for entering such work among all of my respondents, some were also motivated by disenchantment with mainstream teaching, believing that residential work offered opportunities for more creative ways of working. One specifically felt the need to move away from the authoritarian culture of mainstream education where the tawse - the Scottish method of corporal punishment - was the default form of discipline. In that respect, it is worth noting that the tawse was banned from residential schools before it was from mainstream schools.

One informant referred to an intellectual attraction to the work, 'influenced by the development of psychoanalysis'. A crossover between the religious influences of many of the key players in the schools and an emerging interest in psychotherapy would seem to reflect a wider contemporary mood in Scotland. As evident in the Theology and Therapy project at the University of Edinburgh (see Ferguson, 2013). The environment in many of the schools allowed the development of innovative practices. There was, in the words of one respondent 'a spirit of curiosity and enquiry ... an attempt to understand and make more sense [of delinquency]'. She remembers 'a mood of huge optimism at that time. It was just such a wonderful thing'. Another recalls the late 1960s as 'a very exciting time, I really enjoyed it ...' He spoke about the emergence of what he identified as:

social work methods ... the grades system [a behaviourally-based points system] gave way to more thorough assessment, assessment reports, psychological reports, home visit reports ... the whole assessment process started to be put together within the school.

Another school also introduced a review system involving parents in the early 1970s. This might be contrasted with local authority social work expectations to involve parents, which only emerged from the late 1980s. Even then, one of the psychologists noted that local authorities in this regard 'were light years behind [school] in the way they managed it. It was tokenistic'.

Interviewees also spoke about others working in the system at the time, again painting a picture of dynamic and intellectually stimulating environments. One spoke of the school he worked at in the 1960s as containing 'a number of quite outstanding people', going on to mention one, studying for an MEd while teaching and using this study to develop innovative means of assessing boys, who went on to become a professor of psychology in Holland. Another joined the Directorate of a local authority social work department. He and other interviewees were also aware of individuals in other schools who went on to develop successful careers as government inspectors or academics. For instance, the author of the ethnographic study of Glasgow gangs, 'A Glasgow Gang Observed' (1973) written under the pseudonym James Patrick, was a teacher at one of the Glasgow List D Schools. Max Paterson, a psychologist who moved to become headmaster of one of the schools was instrumental in the fledgling Scottish Institute for Human Relations. Kibble made links with Europe to see what might be learned from approaches there. One interviewee went on to study for a Masters in Business Administration, before this became a popular route for social work managers. Two others were involved in funded pieces of research whilst still working as teachers in the schools.

Of course, the work was not all creative. There was a sense of a constant tension between 'old school' ways and more idealistic/creative approaches, which may, in fact have constituted a healthy dialectic. Some of the more experimental approaches often did not endure or their legacy was only apparent after the event. One of the respondents noted the need for a middle way between more traditional behaviourist approaches and ideas of greater participative and democratic ways of working.

While the schools attracted some idealistically motivated teachers who were already professionally qualified, there were also other routes into employment and ultimately leadership in the schools. One of my informants, for instance, started out as the school chef. From this position he began to undertake residential shifts under the system of residential duty allowance (RDA) whereby teachers, care workers, instructors and ancillary staff undertook residential duties. Several of my informants mentioned cases of individuals who demonstrated an aptitude for child care work through such a route, subsequently going on to complete relevant academic qualifications and following careers in the schools.

The diverse nature of the workforce in the schools required a particular hands-on style of leadership. One former head noted that '[it] was rare to get someone with a qualification or background in residential care when it came to basic grade posts. It was easy when it came to management posts'. The same head spoke of the multi-disciplinary team he inherited when taking up post: 'I remember the team at the time comprised an undertaker, a golf professional and an electrician. That was it ...'. This reality required that senior staff undertook a prominent role in modeling practice. Harris's oral history of

Kibble, for instance, gives the example of a previous headmaster, attired in his vest, serving the whole school breakfast, a scenario that would be replicated in some way across all of the schools.

The above example reflects an inevitable vocational dimension to leadership posts, which required that senior staff lived on the premises and were a constant presence in the schools:

Q: You lived on campus with your family?

A: I did. And I had the Depute next door, the third in charge ... the other thing, there was myself, a depute, a third in charge and a senior assistant - that was the management structure. So there was always one of those on duty on campus. So we tended to take a fixed night each and we would rotate the Friday ...

This vocational element also applied to teachers. They (and trade instructors) did residential duties on top of their day jobs and many of them also lived on site. Throughout the 1960s and for much of the 70s, teachers were the dominant professional grouping in the schools. As one informant said, '[t]hey ruled the roost when I started'. It was only with the professionalisation of social work in the early 1970s that the schools began to attract those with social work qualifications.

## The outside world

### *The Scottish Education Department and List D Schools Psychologists*

All of those interviewed who worked in the schools prior to the removal of central government funding spoke warmly of Scottish Office civil servants, who financed the schools and performed an external management function. The Scottish Education Department was felt to have a better understanding of the schools than the emergent Social Work Services Group: 'The people in the Scottish Office knew an awful lot about the schools, took an interest in the schools, cared about the schools, even though they were professional civil servants'. This might be contrasted with the generic and transient management cultures in the civil service nowadays.

While the schools were a loose amalgam of independently managed entities rather than a homogenous system, the Scottish Office civil servants, with a knowledge spanning several schools could perform a bridging role in terms of putting teachers and social workers with particular interests in touch with one another. They also encouraged innovation, driving, for example, the opening of Loaningdale School in Biggar in the early 1960s: 'the idea was to see if you could operate in a more open and participative way with selected young people'. This reflected the influence of pioneering figures in residential schooling, such as A.S. Neil but also of the therapeutic community idea developed by Maxwell Jones at Dingleton in the Borders. In fact, the therapeutic community model influenced several schools. One of my respondents had been head of a girls' school, which he sought to develop along therapeutic community lines.



There was a sense, too, that residential school leadership was a valued job. Throughout the 1970s and up to the point that central government withdrew from funding the schools following the Fiddes Report in 1986, all senior appointments had to be ratified by the Secretary of State. As one of my respondents said, his 'was a very high level appointment...' He went on to describe the nature of the relationship with government:

We had meetings regularly with the Scottish Office and we were always involved in anything to do with new legislation ...because, we were perceived as experts.

Heads of the schools, for example, were central to the development of legislation to regulate the use of secure accommodation. In that sense there was a clear delineation of the professional and administrative functions of leadership and management, within which the professional expertise of school heads was recognised and validated by the administrative wing of government. Within this model of the bureau professional, civil servants were trained and socialised to support the organisational and professional goals of the schools within an overall public service ethos.

### *The approved school psychological service*

One of the achievements of the Scottish Office civil servants within such a model was to establish the Approved or List D Psychological Service. This was a group of psychologists with a particular remit to support staff working in the schools. 'The first appointment was made in 1961: '... I think it was probably linked to a fairly enlightened HMI and I think enlightened civil servants'.

The psychologists had a role, as one of the respondents noted, to try to 'develop and trying to make ... I suppose just trying to help the schools develop to meet children's needs more appropriately or adequately'. The psychologists performed a role as critical friends with a focus on practice development rather than compliance:

At the outset, the decision was made that psychologists shouldn't be employed by the SED, because they would be seen like inspectors. So it was really a device I guess that they were employed by a school but that was really only for technical, practical purposes. They weren't accountable to the head of that school but they were on the payroll of a particular school.

A number of the respondents recalled the importance of the psychological service:

The List D Schools psychologists - Oh, they were, they were pivotal ... I remember that most of them were very approachable from the start. And their model wasn't hierarchical at all. They were genuinely there.

Another said: 'They tended to be the people that everyone looked to'. Their influence was recognized beyond the schools themselves; if one looks at some of the literature around the time of Kilbrandon (e.g. Martin and Murray, 1976), then the role of List D Schools psychologists in setting out ideas on child development is prominent in articulating what might be identified as a particularly Scottish model of developmental care. It is interesting to contrast the role they played in terms of supporting practice and the explicit intention

that they should not be seen as inspectors, with the compliance-based inspection and regulatory regimes that were to follow.

### *Local authority management, regulation and inspection*

While there were particular legislative and policy developments that might be identified with shifts in management and practice ideologies and styles, these were generally overlapping - elements of previous practices persisted long after changes in the external environment. Obvious external changes were the introduction of the provisions of the 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act in 1971, and perhaps more starkly the regionalisation of local government in 1975, which saw the emergence of large local authority bureaucracies. These were seen to fundamentally erode the role of school heads. One respondent said:

The head cannot just do what they are told to do ... the role of the head when X [local authority] took over was diminished, and diminished and diminished.

While there was some appreciation of the opportunity for new social work ideas to enter the schools the predominant view of local authority control was negative. The main critiques were about a lack of knowledge or understanding of the schools or indeed of residential care. One respondent said that one named large local authority just did not understand and could not manage the schools. Another, using a sporting analogy said that coming under local authority control was 'like dropping down a couple of divisions'.

One consequence of local authority control of the schools was a far greater separation of personal and professional commitment, practical manifestations of which were a move away from erstwhile practices of staff living on site towards what Douglas and Payne (1981) identified as an 'industrial model' of residential care, involving shift systems. The same authors query whether such changes resulted in 'greater job satisfaction, improved morale, lower staff turnover and more commitment to the work?' They conclude with a sense that 'neither staff nor residents have really benefited and the introduction of industrial practices and conditions to human service organisations like residential units has brought as many, if not more, problems than it was expected to solve'. The root problem they identified was that 'caring becomes "just another job"; a matter of clocking in and out of the shift. Commitment, work satisfaction and morale all suffer'. Douglas and Payne, presaging Wardaugh and Wilding's (1993) critique of the corruption of care note that a 'system that revolves around the duty rota must inevitably corrupt even the most basic caring principles'.

The difficulties school leaders encountered in respect of local authority bureaucracy were compounded by the increasing dominance of the managerial ideologies that emerged over the 1980s and 90s. Managerialism was predicated upon the three Es, economy, efficiency and effectiveness and valorised generic management skills. It had no time for what was considered the self-interest of professional groups, nor the restrictive practices of state bureaucracies. Applied to residential child care, managerialism led to greater external control, often exercised by managers with little or no experience of the sector.

Managerialism spawned its own 'policy community' a term coined by educational researchers (McPherson and Raab, 1988) to describe the network of people in and linked

to Government who determine the policy agenda. They suggest that expertise is not always a criterion for entry to this community, the role of which was not to debate or contest but to facilitate government policy. Humes (1983) is even more trenchant in his critique. He identified a leadership class in Scottish education, the *modus operandi* of which was

to control the flow of information relating to policy initiatives, the marginalisation of dissent, ... circumscribing the scope of government funded research enquiries' and the promotion of a cult of managerialism which encouraged concentration on 'how?' rather than 'why?' questions (cited in Humes and Bryce, 2003, p. 76).

Without using the term, respondents in this research recognised the emergence of a policy community in residential child care with similar functions to facilitate particular policy initiatives, often based on little practical experience or understanding of the field. This was summed up directly by one respondent:

And then you have guys like ... it is amazing how influential some folk are who know nothing ... yet folk are listening to them. So they are obviously saying the right things i.e. they confirm what other folk want to believe.

### *The Regulation of Care*

The election of a New Labour government in 1997 led to managerialism being fine-tuned to a new public management (NPM) (Clarke, Gerwitz and McLaughlin, 2000). A central plank of the NPM agenda was the regulatory apparatus that followed from the Regulation of Care Act (2001). This established the Scottish Social Services Council with a role to regulate the workforce and the Care Commission to set standards of care and to inspect against these. Respondents in this study were unanimous in their criticism of, in particular, the Care Commission and its impact on practice through its inspection regime. Most could recognise the intentions behind regulation but were scathing about the narrow procedural ways in which such developments had been taken forward. One respondent claimed:

In principle and in my head I believe in independent regulation. And I still think it is better to have some. But I do feel it has become a tail wagging a dog.

Another made a similar point:

I believed in the purpose of the Care Commission and the SSSC, in a sense, regulating the workforce, regulating the service. I thought it was appropriate and we were very, very receptive to that.

Two respondents could identify good experiences of inspection linked to the perceived grounded knowledge of particular inspectors: 'That person was very sensible because she has got a lot of experience in residential child care'. The view was, however, that the culture and indeed the understanding of inspectors changed: 'What changed, I think, in my experience, was the individuals'. The perceived lack of expertise of certain inspectors was felt acutely:

Those that have no idea what they are doing are writing policy and procedure and they don't know the craft. It's like having somebody who is no' an electrician, writing an electrical manual about how to rewire a house. It is dangerous. Those who have been rewiring houses for a long time need to articulate the craft.

There was also a perceived arrogance attached to inspectors' seeming lack of understanding of the field:

... this sounds cocky and I don't mean it to ... there isn't a care commission inspector who knows more about [residential care] than I do - operationally and theoretically.

The same respondent went on:

I asked the Care Commission to provide theoretical background to the recommendations that they were giving us. And they said they didn't need to. And I said, No, you don't have any ... The research base for inspection and regulation in many areas is very, very thin.

Objections were not then to inspection or regulation per se but to the manner of its enactment. Moss and Petrie (2002) differentiate between good management and managerialism. All my respondents who had experienced the regulatory regime identified a petty managerial culture, which was deemed to be of questionable relevance and in fact detracted from the care of children. One said: 'I am spending so much time [providing evidence for the Care Commission] that I am no' spending time wi' the kids, and the impact's huge'. Reflecting a wider risk agenda (see Webb, 2006) he questioned the focus of many inspections around this: 'Why do we need a risk assessment to allow a kid to go to the theatre? How many children have been hurt going to the theatre in the last three years'?

This effect of inspection and regulation on direct practice is an area that has rarely been touched upon in the academic literature on residential care to date. Gilligan (2015) makes the observation that many of those in roles as regulators of practice do not have the 'hours on the clock' to be able to do so with sufficient insight or nuance. This critique would certainly accord with the experiences of respondents in this study. It is an area that merits further study.

Before considering some of these shifts from a more theoretical perspective, it may be worth trying to draw out and summarise some key features of leadership of residential child care as evinced through these life histories. A case might be made that such leadership involves and, arguably, requires of those undertaking such roles, a strong sense of vocation, borne often from personal background but also reflecting a wider idealism, opportunities for intellectual stimulation, and a preparedness to lead and model everyday practice. The ability to demonstrate such aptitudes, in turn, requires a facilitative external environment. In the case of residential schools, the external environment changed in a way that inhibited the practice of such personal qualities.

## Discussion

At this point and in keeping with Goodson's (1992) identification of the wider value of life history research as incorporating social scientific analysis, I will introduce some such reflections that might bear further examination. I draw on two particular frames of analysis, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) identification of particular organizational types and Bauman's (1993) critique of bureaucracy. I also touch on an epistemological point about the nature of expertise in residential child care and the need for this to be informed by practice experience.

In a range of work, Deleuze writes of what he calls assemblages and is interested in how stability and movement become possible within these. In the analysis that follows, I imagine residential schools as an assemblage, a configuration of different parts, the composition and possibilities of which change over time. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that assemblages are formed around an axis with both 'paranoid' and 'schizophrenic' poles. The 'paranoid' pole veers toward rigid order. In contrast, the 'schizophrenic' pole tends toward chaos, the absence of certainty and endless flow. He suggests that bodies, including organisations function along such an axis. Straying towards the paranoid pole inhibits creativity, while going too far towards the schizophrenic side risks such a loss of organisation that proper functioning becomes impossible. One might conceive of the residential schools, historically, as veering towards the schizophrenic pole, although there were mechanisms, via the Scottish Office and the List D Schools Psychological Service that brought some coherence to the system or assemblage. This positioning opened up possibilities for creativity and innovation. In contrast, one might feasibly argue that residential care is currently situated on a paranoid pole, bound by external standards and demands. While this may be contended, rightly or wrongly, to minimise risk and harm, it also stifles creativity and the kind of innovation that might derive from practice experimentation.

The other thing that a high level of regulation does is to sap the moral impulse that characterized residential schooling in the past and attracted highly motivated individuals to work in it. Orme (2002) notes that regulation institutionalised the shift of care from the private to the public domain. Care under NPM became 'corporate' rather than personal. Bauman (2000, p. 9) identifies a philosophical disjunction between regulation, which operates in the public sphere and individual commitment, which is by its nature personal arguing that 'when we obscure the essential human and moral aspects of care behind ever more rules and regulations we make 'the daily practice of social work ever more distant from its original ethical impulse'. Thus, the plethora of rules and regulations that increasingly surround practice become not just minor but necessary irritants; they might act to dull the moral impulse to care.

Bureaucracy and the demands of regulation take practitioners away from the daily task of caring for children and impose what Bauman identifies as social distance between caregivers and the cared for. In a much-cited paper on what they call the corruption of care, Wardhaugh and Wilding (1993) draw on Bauman's analysis to outline a number of dimensions by which residential care of children becomes contaminated. However, note that, above all: '[t]he essential element [of corruption] . . . is that it constitutes an active

betrayal of the basic values on which the organisation is supposedly based' (1993, p. 5). The constant demand to meet external regulatory demands, which were highlighted by participants in this study, may skew understanding and performance of the task away from what ought to be its central values towards the technical rationality of fulfilling inspectorial requirements. Such a dynamic is critiqued in Munro's (2011) review of child protection.

This skewing of the task, one might argue, may be a consequence of political and managerial cultures, which regard values as something to be codified rather than lived and knowledge as something that can be vested in abstract standards rather than practical experience. This raises an epistemological point about the nature of knowledge appropriate to care work. Social work (and indeed public service management more generally) has sought to build a knowledge base, primarily, around what the Greek philosopher Aristotle (1999) would define as *techne* or technical knowledge, set out in various codes and standards. The result of such technocratic consciousness or technical rationality is instrumentalisation (Whan, 1986), within which people become objects of interventions done unto them.

Care work calls for a different kind of knowledge, what Moss and Petrie (2002) identify as practical/moral knowledge, based on practical experience. It is exemplified in Aristotle's intellectual virtue of *phronesis* or practical wisdom, which might be identified as the thoughtful reflection on experience (Gadamer, 2004). *Phronesis* is fundamentally value based and oriented towards an idea of the good life. The consequences of a residential care system that has abrogated this fundamental moral purpose in pursuit of compliance to regulatory requirements, perhaps to be seen in what Webb (2010) identifies as the 'insidious leniencies', seems to have become a feature of residential care. Exemplified perhaps in events in Rotherham over this past year (Jay, 2014), Webb (2010) contrasts what he identifies as an earlier clarity borne of faith and conviction and a contemporary hesitancy towards the enforcement of norms and values in residential care. The failings that Jay identifies in residential child care happened on managerialism's watch and under regimes of regulation and inspection. This is a point that merits further examination.

## Conclusion

Taylor, writing of social work history, speaks about the importance of 'multiple and nuanced accounts of practice' rather than 'a reiteration of familiar arguments and themes' (2008, pp. 693-4). The 'familiar' theme of leadership in residential schools as set down in the various inquiry reports into the sector is that it was inadequate, especially in respect of its responsibilities to protect children. A number of lessons might be drawn from the stories referenced above that allow for the emergence of an arguably revisionist picture of leadership in residential schools. The obvious starting point is to recognise a strong moral purpose and value based leadership in the sector. Other factors include an intellectual curiosity and the encouragement of a pioneering spirit, which facilitated the development of practice-based knowledge and understanding. The development of such knowledge was facilitated by what might be thought of as the 'critical friends' of the List D Schools Psychological Service. Such a model of practice improvement bears further

consideration as an alternative to the managerial and regulatory regimes that frame contemporary practice.

I close with a final quotation from Webb (2010, p. 1400) who ends his own article thus:

Neither the perspective of the elapsed half century since, nor the easy assumption that things in all respects have improved, serves as a reliable basis for judgement: the drawing of any invidious comparisons with what takes place today in 'corporate care' might invite a brief reflection on the parable of the mote and the beam.

It would be hard to better his conclusion. We have perhaps lost something along the way in the leadership of residential child care.

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